

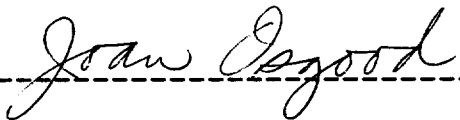
Cooperation, Communication, are the Keys to an  
Effective Mainstream Program for  
Hearing Impaired Students

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May, 1991

Expected Date of Graduation  
May, 1991

Thesis statement: Proper knowledge, communication, and cooperation can assure an effective mainstream program.

## I. Mainstreaming and P.L. 94-142

## II. Difficulties faced by Hearing Impaired students

### A. Social

### B. Emotional

1. self-esteem
2. motivation

### C. Academic

1. language problems
2. everyday situations

### III. Role of Deaf Education teacher

### A. Teaching - resource room

## B. Educating others - deafness

C. Support/Consult for regular education teachers, parents, and students

#### IV. Role of Regular Education teacher

### A. Teaching - regular classroom

### B. Support of Hearing Impaired students

### C. Liaison between students

## V. Role of Parents

### A. Support/Understanding

**B. Provide for language development**

## VI. Role of Administration

### A. Legal aspects

B. Funding

VII. Role of Students

VIII. Importance of Communication

IX. Conclusion

Cooperation, Communication, are the Keys to an  
Effective Mainstream Program for  
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Mainstreaming of hearing impaired students into regular classrooms is a controversial subject matter among many special education teachers, regular education teachers, administrators, and parents. In the past, hearing impaired students, as well as other students in the many areas of special education, were placed in self-contained special education classrooms. This segregation of special education students was done whether the students needed it or not. In a sense, these students were treated as second-class citizens. In 1975, Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, better known as Public Law 94-142. With the enactment of this law, many changes would come into existence. Now, all children were entitled to a "free and appropriate public education", and could no longer be treated as second-class citizens (Hock, 1990). This law, along with proper knowledge, communication and cooperation, can assure an effective mainstream program.

Public Law 94-142, which continues to be in effect today, mandates that "children with handicaps be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)" (Hock, 1990). The Least Restrictive Environment states that, when possible, handicapped children should be educated with those who are not handicapped.

In these instances, children can be placed in regular education classes and receive supplementary aids and services unless the severity of the handicap is such that regular education placement is not possible (Hock, 1990). P.L. 94-142 is not a "mainstreaming law". It does not call for all children to be pulled out of special classes and dumped into regular classes. Instead, it provides for an alternative classroom placement for the child who may not need a self-contained special class. Proper implementation of P.L. 94-142 and the Least Restrictive Environment factor should serve to allow for the placement of handicapped students into classrooms where they can receive the best education possible according to their needs. Mainstreaming of students into regular classrooms, while it is not mandated by the federal government, is an alternative which can be used for many hearing impaired students.

"Recent studies report that mainstreamed students who are hearing impaired experience difficulty participating in class and interacting socially with hearing students" (Luckner, 1989). However, with the right attitudes and cooperation of students, parents, teachers, and administrators, mainstreaming of hearing impaired students into regular classrooms can be accomplished. This type of cooperation can only be accomplished through careful advance planning.

Implementation of a successful mainstreaming program involving hearing impaired students must deal with more than just the academic aspects; it must deal with the social and emotional

aspects as well. Allowing hearing impaired children to interact with normal hearing children within a positive educational environment can help those students to develop skills which will assist them in other life situations (Cassidy, 1990).

Dealing with the social aspects remains very much a challenge for everyone involved: the students, peers, special education teachers, regular education teachers, administrators, and even parents. One approach is to focus on the positive aspects of hearing impaired students (Young, 1988). Making sure that others understand that a hearing impaired child should be treated no differently from anyone else is a first and very important step. Every child, whether he is in special education or not, needs to be made to feel that he is good at something. Capitalizing on the strengths of the hearing impaired child, rather than his weaknesses, is a good way to assure a more positive social integration into the regular classroom (Young, 1988).

The emotional aspects of integrating hearing impaired students into regular classrooms must be carefully considered. The proper handling of these emotional aspects can lead to a successful mainstreaming program. Hearing impaired students, if left in segregated classrooms, can become isolated from their peers. There may even be instances where these children are made to feel that they do not belong with the students in regular classes. Attitudes toward handicapped students tend to reflect fear, hostility, and aversion. These attitudes often become the

very obstacles which prevent the integration of hearing impaired students into regular classrooms (Rittenhouse, 1987). By allowing the integration of the hearing impaired and normally hearing students, the isolation factor is corrected and all of the students are a part of a group. Lori Hamm, a fourth grade teacher at Mary Bryan Elementary School in Indianapolis, Indiana feels that the integration and interaction between hearing impaired and normally hearing students serves to raise the self-esteem of the hearing impaired child. Successful integration, shows that hearing impaired students are capable of surviving in a regular education classroom.

Motivation is another area which must be addressed as far as the emotional aspects of mainstreaming are concerned. High motivational levels can be a result of a high self-esteem. Therefore, hearing impaired students who have a high self esteem tend to be more motivated, which is regarded as an important contributor to the success of students (Saur, 1986). Successfully mainstreamed students who are motivated realize that being responsible and in control plays a large part of their success in a mainstream program. This responsibility is needed due to the extra effort put forth by the hearing impaired students to compensate for any information that they have been missed (Saur, 1986).

While dealing with the social and emotional aspects of a successful mainstreaming program, one cannot ignore the obvious academic aspects as well. A hearing impaired child who is

mainstreamed into a regular classroom experiences numerous difficulties while in the class. In the area of academics, the primary difficulty faced by any hearing impaired student, whether he is mainstreamed into regular classes or not, is that of language development. Hearing impaired children do not acquire language at the same rate or as well as their normally hearing peers. Many times people take for granted their knowledge of language; it is acquired without thinking through hearing and such mediums as television, radio, etc... Too often, those who can hear normally forget that a hearing impaired child cannot hear and therefore is not automatically exposed to language and vocabulary (Driscoll, 1988). The vocabulary development of a hearing impaired student is an area which must be constantly enhanced. "A lot of vocabulary is something that you pick up by hearing" (Wodicka, 1991). Because of this, a hearing impaired child's vocabulary is less developed than that of their normally hearing peers. One way to alleviate this problem is to provide the hearing impaired child with as many language-based experiences as possible (Wodicka, 1991). Exposing the hearing impaired child to wide range of experiences covering a wide range of areas, while at the same time repeating as much vocabulary as possible will assure that the hearing impaired child will make advances in his language acquisition and development.

Many difficulties experienced by the hearing impaired child which are related to academics are the direct result of common everyday occurrences. Obviously a child who is hearing impaired



experiences difficulty in hearing. Many of these hearing impaired children rely on hearing aids as well as visual cues in order to help them manage in a regular classroom. Regular education teachers who have hearing impaired students in their classes should never turn their back to the child while talking. Likewise , students in the class should make sure they, too, face the hearing impaired child while talking. Lighting level must also be considered when hearing impaired students are present in the class. For example, a teacher who is talking in a darkened room may as well not be talking, because the hearing impaired child is not able to watch the teacher's face in order to receive the visual cues he needs. Environmental noise can be another problem faced by the hearing impaired child in a regular classroom. While hearing aids also amplify speech sounds, they are not selective. These hearing aids also amplify background conversation, rustling papers, furnace noise, and footsteps. In these situations hearing aids are often rendered useless. Care should be taken to try to reduce as much background noise as possible in order that the hearing impaired student receives the full benefits of his hearing aids. One final point to remember is that a hearing impaired child is expending much more energy in order to hear than does a normally hearing child. Therefore, the hearing impaired child may become more easily fatigued due to the constant need for visual and auditory alertness. This, then, can lead to a decrease in the child's attention span.

Hearing impaired children do face many difficulties

throughout their lives. Placing these children in mainstreaming programs can create even more difficulties. However, with the proper techniques, a mainstreaming program can exist. There are many people who play important roles within a successful mainstreaming program. These people include the deaf education teacher, regular education teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Without the ongoing support, communication, and cooperation of all of these people, a successful mainstreaming program cannot exist.

Perhaps the most important aspect of having a successful mainstream program is the deaf education teacher. Without support from this person, a mainstream program could very well fail. The deaf education teacher is the one who has the knowledge and skills needed to specifically work with hearing impaired students. This special educator's primary, and perhaps most important, role is that of teaching those hearing impaired students when they cannot be mainstreamed into regular classrooms. When a mainstreaming program is put into effect, it is this teacher who operates a resource classroom to which the hearing impaired students go for various parts of their school day. It is in this classroom that the hearing impaired students receive instruction for subjects into which they cannot be mainstreamed.

In addition to teaching, another role the special education teacher must perform in order to assure the success of a mainstream program, is to educate others on deafness. Many

people are ignorant and have well-defined attitudes toward the deaf and hearing impaired. These attitudes must be abolished, and it is here that the special education teacher can make the most of her knowledge. The first step in educating others on deafness is to introduce the concept of hearing loss to the hearing students as well as teachers in the class, and explain that there are two types: conductive and sensorineural. Conductive losses can be helped by making sounds louder; sensorineural losses cannot. The fact that many people cannot even imagine what a hearing loss is like can be partially overcome by using a cassette tape to stimulate a hearing loss (Nussbaum, 1988). In this way, the hearing students and teachers may realize that having a hearing loss does not mean that sounds only appear to be softer than normal, but they are distorted as well. Another aspect of educating those with normal hearing about deafness concerns the myth that a hearing aid can help a hearing impaired child to have normal hearing. In this case it is best to stress that hearing aids are not like eye glasses in that they can never "fix" a hearing loss to the point where the hearing impaired person has normal hearing. Granted, a hearing aid can make sounds louder but cannot make them clearer (Nussbaum, 1988). Several other points need to be stressed when educating others about deafness and hearing loss. One important point is that other people must be assured that hearing impaired children are normal children too. These children can run, play and possess the same feelings as any other child. A second

important point to make is that hearing impaired children can be successful when they grow up (Nussbaum, 1988). People must be made to realize that a hearing impairment can be a handicap, but that it also can be overcome.

Yet another role which must be performed by the deaf education teacher is to be available for support of and consultation with the other members of a mainstreaming program. The deaf education teacher, because of the knowledge he/she possesses, must be willing to consult with the classroom teachers, monitor the student's progress, and serve to keep communication lines open among students, teachers, and administrators (LeBuffe, 1988). When the deaf education teacher is made available for consultation concerning the hearing impaired students, regular education teachers gain the opportunity to "air their concerns, learn about effective methods for instructing hearing impaired children, and gain confidence in their ability to teach children who have special needs" (LeBuffe, 1987). The deaf education teacher also needs to be made available for consultation with the parents of hearing impaired children. In this way, communication lines can be kept open and neither party is ignorant as to what is happening with a specific student. This support, consultation, and communication which the deaf education teacher provides among the members of a mainstreaming program can be likened to a partnership. Each and every hearing impaired student possesses a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. Along those same lines, all of the

members of a mainstreaming program provide various attributes and demands. When a mainstreaming program is successful, that success can be largely attributed to the effective partnership of all who are involved (Hock, 1990).

Regular education teachers are perhaps as important to the mainstream program as the deaf education teacher, because it is this teacher who educates the hearing impaired child in a regular classroom. This person is responsible for teaching the hearing impaired child as well as providing support and being a liaison between the hearing impaired and the normally hearing students. The absence of this important person would cause a mainstreaming program to fail. The first step which the regular classroom teacher must take is that of working with the deaf education teacher to gain insights on how to teach the hearing impaired students. He/she should communicate with the deaf education teacher concerning the abilities and his disabilities of the hearing impaired students (Cassidy, 1990). Knowing what the hearing impaired students have difficulties with allows the regular classroom teacher to make any changes needed in his/her teaching style. Some types of instructional modification allow for peer tutoring, study guides, and writing assignments on the chalkboard (Hock, 1990). Another way the regular classroom teacher can better instruct the hearing impaired students is to position those students near him/her, so as to allow the full use and benefit of the child's hearing aids. Also, this classroom teacher should not shout or talk to the child in an

exaggeratedly louder than normal voice; it only serves to distort the sound more. The classroom teacher should be involved in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) goals of each of the hearing impaired students. Finally, he/she should have specific behavioral expectations, not only for the hearing impaired students, but for the entire class as well. He/she needs to make sure the hearing impaired child understands the classroom rules as well as the consequences which go with them (Cassidy, 1990).

"A classroom is truly integrated only if the teacher makes an effort to include special students rather than just accommodate them" (Darrow, 1990). A regular classroom teacher can provide this type of support for the hearing impaired students in his/her class by making sure that those students are made part of the group, and not excluded from it. Participation in classroom as well as social activities must be encouraged and supported. The regular education teacher must make sure that his/her hearing impaired students are "doing" and not merely "watching" (Darrow, 1990). By incorporating the hearing impaired students into group situations, good relationships are facilitated with others in the regular classroom (Saur, 1986). Every effort must be made by the regular classroom teacher to support all of the efforts made by the hearing impaired child. Making sure that the use of the classroom, class time, and lessons are planned for the hearing impaired child rather than around him is yet another way the regular classroom teacher can provide his/her support. In the area of social interactions,

providing for peer tutors focuses the attention away from the teacher and more toward the interaction of the hearing impaired and normally hearing students (Darrow, 1990), which then serves to reinforce how to behave in social situations (Cassidy, 1990).

Parents play an integral role in their hearing impaired child's education. Without parental input and support, a mainstreaming program may flounder. The first step parents can take is to understand their child's hearing loss and realize that he may need extra and special instruction throughout his education. Parents must have a positive attitude where the education of their child is concerned (Saur, 1986). Parents should make an effort to communicate their ideas as well as their concerns to the deaf education teacher as well as the regular education teacher. Parental support, while important in the hearing impaired child's educational setting, first begins at home. Parents should learn not to make excuses for their hearing impaired child. If there are other siblings, the same expectations should be established for all the children in the family. Finally, parents need to provide as many diverse experiences as possible for their hearing impaired child. A hearing impaired child does not acquire language at the same rate as does his normally hearing peers. Furthermore, most language acquisition occurs before the age of five, which is before the child begins his education. If the parents do not work with their child to promote his language acquisition, his vocabulary development will lag far behind that of his peers.

Administrative support of a mainstreaming program is critical (Darrow, 1990). Administrators, even though they are not in the classroom, play an important part in the implementation of a mainstreaming program. For the building principal or vice-principal, one of the priority roles is to make the special education teacher feel more a part of the school. This person is to help with any problems which may arise, and act as a go-between for the special education and the regular education teachers. Another role of the principal/vice-principal of the school is to talk to the parents and attend the Annual Case Review of each student in the special education program. Finally, the principal/vice-principal should be knowledgeable of all laws concerning the mainstreaming program as well as support the program throughout the school. The Superintendent of Special Education also plays an important role within a mainstreaming program. This person's primary responsibility is to assure that funds are available for the program to continue. This person hires all the staff needed, as well as deals with the legal aspects of the mainstreaming program. This person intervenes when there is a threat of legal action. He/she informs teachers of their rights and students of theirs. When the administration supports a mainstreaming program, the results can be wonderful; if not the results can be bad (Aull-Sauer, 1991).

The mainstreaming program could not exist without the support of administrators, teachers, and parents. One important member who must not be overlooked is the student, for the



mainstreaming program which is in existence, is for his benefit. Students need to be able to talk to their parents and their teachers in order to voice any concerns or fears they may have. These same students need to feel comfortable enough around their teachers in order to let the teacher know when and if he/she is having trouble in class. Finally, students need to become comfortable with their own hearing loss in order to make those around them comfortable too.

Communication is an important aspect of everyday life. Consequently, a mainstreaming program cannot exist without it. Lines of communication must be present and open between all of those persons involved in the mainstreaming program: teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Communication between the deaf education teacher and the classroom teacher is important in order to assure the availability of assistance as it is needed (Luckner, 1988). Communication between the teachers and the parents of the hearing impaired students assures that parents are being kept current concerning their child's progress. It also allows parents to voice any concerns they may have about the education their child is receiving. Teachers and parents must communicate effectively with school administration. Concerns must be aired and resolved, for without administrative support the mainstreaming program could fail. Finally, communication between all of these people and the student must exist. This communication allows whoever is working with the hearing impaired student "to provide the hearing impaired student with the

individual attention and work needed before the student falls behind and becomes frustrated" (Luckner, 1988).

Mainstreaming of hearing impaired students into regular classrooms continues to be an area of controversy. People tend to hold very definite attitudes toward those who are hearing impaired, which are reflected by fear and hostility. Placing the students who are able into regular classrooms can encourage interaction and eventually abolish those negative attitudes. A mainstreaming program simply cannot exist without the support and dedication of many people. These people include administrators, teachers, parents, and students. All who are involved have various, yet specific roles to perform. By working together, a partnership can evolve which allows the mainstreaming program to be successful.

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